United Nations S/2015/404

Security Council

Distr.: General
3 June 2015
English
Original: French

Letter dated 2 June 2015 from the Permanent Representative of France to the United Nations addressed to the President of the Security Council

I have the honour to transmit to you a letter dated 2 June 2015 from the Special Representative of the National Coalition of Syrian Revolutionary and Opposition Forces to the United Nations regarding the humanitarian situation in Syria (see annex).

I should be grateful if you would have this letter and its annex circulated as a document of the Security Council.

(*Signed*) François **Delattre**

15-08868 (E) 040615 050615

Please recycle

Annex to the letter dated 2 June 2015 from the Permanent Representative of France to the United Nations addressed to the President of the Security Council

[Original: English]

On behalf of the National Coalition of Syrian Revolution and Opposition Forces, it is with great concern that I draw your attention to a dangerous escalation in the Syrian regime's systematic use of indiscriminate aerial weapons in civilian occupied areas across Syria. Four years after the start of the Syrian uprising, indiscriminate aerial weapons such as barrel bombs are now the leading killer of Syrian civilians, accounting for over 65 per cent of all civilian deaths in the country. It is imperative that the Security Council take comprehensive action, including through the imposition of a no-fly zone, to stop acts of aerial aggression and protect civilians in need.

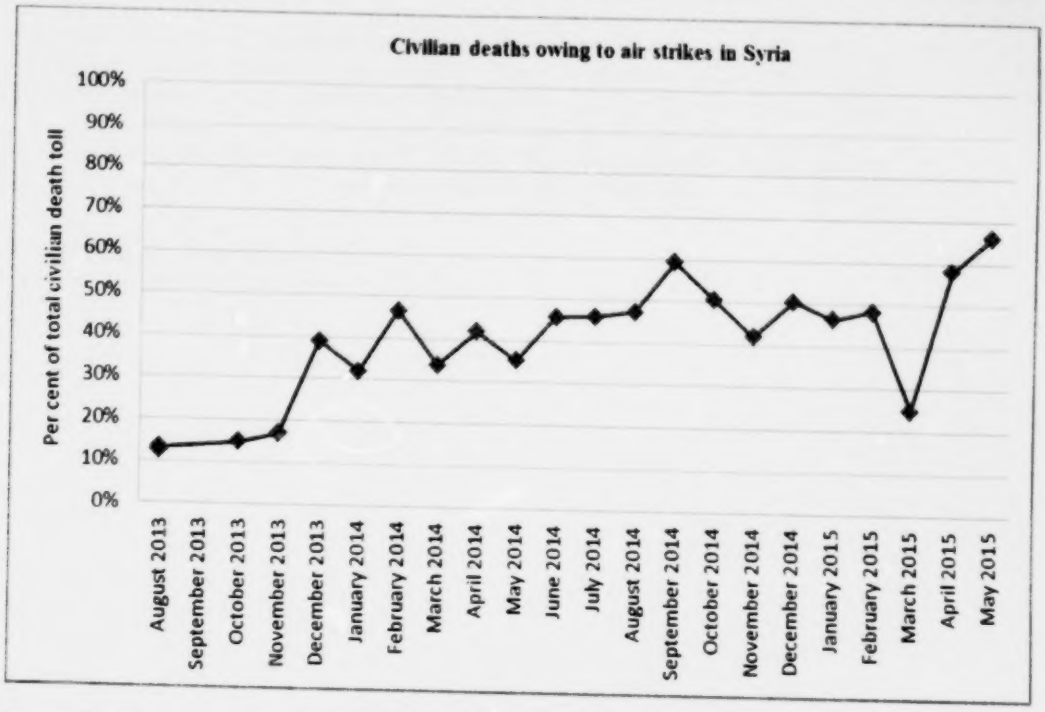
On Saturday 30 May and Sunday 31 May 2015, at least 141 civilians were killed as a result of Syrian regime air strikes in the city of Al-Bab in north-east Aleppo, the city of Al-Shaddadi south of Al-Hasakah, the town of Sayda in Daraa, the village of Hatla east of Deir Ez-zor, the villages of Balyoun and Jozef in Al-Zaweyi Mountain in Idlib, the village of Al-Za'faranah in Homs, Al-Marj area in eastern Ghouta in Rif Dimashq, the neighbourhood of Al-Hajar al-Aswad south of Damascus and the neighbourhoods of Al-Ferdos and al-Sha'ar in the city of Aleppo. In Aleppo alone, at least 72 civilians were killed as a result of Syrian regime air strikes.

According to the Syrian Observatory for Human Rights, the massacres perpetrated in Aleppo were among the deadliest perpetrated by Bashar al-Assad's aerial forces thus far in 2015. Tragically, they are unlikely to be the last.

Throughout the course of the Syrian crisis, the Syrian regime has become increasingly callous and calculated in its indiscriminate use of aerial attacks to terrorize and kill innocent civilians. Since the chemical weapons attacks on eastern Ghouta just two years ago, the proportion of civilian deaths owing to indiscriminate air strikes has increased by more than five-fold (see the figure below).

Assad's appalling and deadly aerial attacks are part of an ongoing strategy to terrorize Syria's civilian population. While indiscriminate by design, the regime's aerial weapons, such as barrel bombs, are strategically deployed to maximize civilian casualties and suffering. Their overarching purpose is not to score military victories, but rather to target and silence civilian dissent and to sow fear in the minds of those who challenge Assad's tyranny.

Assad's ambition to terrorize civilians is shared by the Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant (ISIL). Syrian regime forces and ISIL terrorists continue to be engaged in a tactical partnership aimed at routing out moderates and those who respect pluralism. Just this past weekend in Aleppo, while Assad's helicopters and jets attacked from the air, ISIL forces intensified their onslaught on the ground. As ISIL seeks to control Azaz and through it, Aleppo, it has engaged in a tactical alliance with Assad to expel moderate forces and facilitate its own advance.



Source: Statistics compiled from the data set of the Violations Documentation Center in Syria.

The actions of the Syrian regime violate international humanitarian and international human rights law, including the Geneva Convention relative to the Protection of Civilian Persons in Time of War. They also violate the will of the Security Council, including resolutions 2118 (2013), 2139 (2014), 2165 (2014) and 2209 (2015), which prohibit the use of aerial weapons and chemical warfare to endanger, injure or kill innocent civilians. It is time that the will of the Security Council be enforced.

On behalf of the Syrian people, I therefore appeal to Member States to:

(a) Enforce Security Council resolutions 2118 (2013), 2139 (2014), 2165 (2014) and 2209 (2015), which prohibit the use of aerial weapons, including barrel bombs and chemical weapons, and require the imposition of measures under Chapter VII of the Charter of the United Nations in the case of chemical weapons use in Syria;

(b) Stop aerial attacks by imposing a no-fly zone. A no-fly zone would save lives and protect civilians by putting an immediate end to the Syrian regime's indiscriminate use of aerial weapons, which is the leading killer of civilians in Syria;

(c) Refer the situation in Syria to the International Criminal Court so that justice for victims is served and further atrocities can be prevented.

It is imperative that the Security Council employ all measures capable of stopping the killing in Syria. A no-fly zone is not a panacea, but it is the most effective way to save lives and alleviate suffering. It is also a way to begin to get a grip of the situation on the ground, lay the foundation towards a political solution and forge a sustainable peace in our country, which remains the ultimate objective of the Syrian people and the Syrian National Coalition.

(*Signed*) Najib **Ghadbian**
Special Representative to the United Nations